

Where Do You Run When You Face Uncertain Times?

David is the most prominent Bible character besides Jesus. His name, mentioned 1,139 times in the King James Version, means “beloved.” He was loved by God and still is by millions of Bible readers inspired by his story. But not everyone loved him. He was hated by some of his own brothers, his father-in-law, King Saul, and all the enemies of Israel. God’s favor on David’s life provoked jealousy and placed a bullseye on his back. Jesus warned, “You will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved” (Matt. 10:22, NKJV). We can endure being the target of hell’s hatred when we know we’re the focus of heaven’s love.

Imagine David’s emotional roller coaster ride. When the harp player-turned-giant slayer killed Goliath, he went from a zero to an instant hero. The farm boy from obscurity became an overnight celebrity. God promoted him from the pasture to palace (2 Sam. 7:8). He was appointed captain of Saul’s army and ate caviar in the castle. He was living like royalty when, suddenly, the red carpet was jerked out from under him. His dream turned into a nightmare. Saul’s insane jealousy became a sinister obsession to destroy him. As quickly as David became the most famous face in Israel, Saul vilified him as public enemy number one. He nursed a vicious vendetta against him and threw his spear at David three different times to kill him, but each time he escaped (1 Sam. 18:11; 19:10). Saul put a bounty on his head, mounted a massive manhunt and chased him as a fugitive for years. Our adversary seeks to destroy us daily too (1 Pet. 5:8), but God’s hand is a supernatural shield around us (Ps. 5:12).

David, now an outlaw, ran for his life hiding in woods and caves (1 Sam. 23:14). We are all running somewhere. When the going gets tough, we will either run toward God or away from

God for refuge. When life is unfair, people mistreat you and the enemy attacks you from all sides, where do you run for refuge? The old hymn still rings true, "Where could I go? O where could I go? Seeking a refuge for my soul. Needing a Friend to help me in the end, where could I go but to the Lord?" David ran to five specific people or places which are all spiritually significant:

1. David ran to the prophet Samuel in Ramah (1 Sam. 19:18-24).

What a perfect person and place to run to in a crisis. Ramah was a town full of prophets so David ran to the prophet of God (who anointed him the next king earlier) for prayer and advice. When you're facing a trial, get in God's presence and around anointed people who can pray you through to victory. Don't withdraw into a shell and isolate yourself. Find other believers to stand with you and support you. There's power in partnership with anointed people.

2. David ran to his best friend Jonathan (1 Sam. 20:1). They were brothers-in-law but closer than brothers. Jonathan, meaning "the Lord has given," was a spiritual friend who "strengthened his hand in God" (1 Sam. 23:16). He saw God's favor on David and was supportive not envious of his success. They were BFFs—"The soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" (1 Sam. 18:1). Earlier, Jonathan made a covenant with David and gave him his royal robe, sword, bow and belt (1 Sam. 18:4). That's like giving someone your favorite hunting rifle, fishing pole, knife and boots.

We all need spiritual friends we can turn to when life gets tough. True friends know us in and out but love us anyway. They love us enough to tell us the truth even when it hurts. True friends build your faith, let you vent without judging and keep your secrets safe. Later, when Jonathan was slain in battle, David mourned, "I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; you have been very pleasant to me; your love to me was wonderful, surpassing the love of women" (2 Sam. 1:25-26).

It was a different level of love, not romantic or sexual. (Some try to twist this into something perverted. David was not gay; he had multiple wives—2 Sam. 3:2-5.) They shared a deep bond of trust and goodwill that comes from common interests and experiences. It's an "I've-got-your-back-no-matter-what" loyalty that will do anything for a friend in need. Jonathan stuck his neck out and repeatedly helped David avoid King Saul, knowing it might jeopardize his own shot at the throne. Everyone needs a friend like that they can run to.

3. David ran to Ahimelech the Priest in Nob (1 Sam. 21:1-9). Nob was a Levitical city of priests two miles from Jerusalem (1 Sam. 22:19). This was another spiritual place to find sanctuary among godly people. There David found a priest to console him. We also have a great High Priest we can run to for help (Heb. 4:14-16). He also received provision to sustain him (Ahimelech gave him showbread to feed him and his famished men). Then Ahimelech gave him Goliath's sword. This was a trophy from a former victory, which became a prophetic promise. You see, what God has done, He will do again. David's faith soared, "If God brought me through the biggest battle of my life, He'll carry me through this one too! The same God who helped me defeat Goliath will deliver me from King Saul." Goliath's sword was a tangible reminder of God's greatness and faithfulness—He can and will move for me again!

4. David ran to Gath (1 Sam. 21:10-15). This was a major mistake. What was he thinking? It was a bad idea to go to Gath, Goliath's hometown, carrying Goliath's sword. That would get you noticed or hurt in a hurry. Achish, King of Gath, means "serpent charmer" (a fitting type of the devil). Gath was a pagan, Philistine city and a hotbed of evil. This is the spiritual equivalent of running to the world and sin for refuge instead of the church. When some people face trouble, they run to drugs, alcohol, immorality and other addictions. This bad decision led David to fear and foolish behavior. He pretended to be insane (he faked a seizure and let his saliva

drool down his beard) in order to escape. Don't run to Gath (the pagan world won't help you). Instead, run to Ramah or Nob, run to God and His people for the help you need.

5. David ran to the Cave of Adullam (1 Sam. 22:1-2). David was the original "Captain Caveman." Here we find Captain Dave in his man cave. Adullam means "resting place or hiding place." The Hebrew root means "to dangle" (as a bucket at the end of a rope). David was at the end of his rope. When you get to the end of your rope, tie a knot and hang on! That's usually when God shows up. Exhausted, David hit rock bottom, then God started turning things around. He brought 400 men (diamonds in the rough) into his life for him to lead. "Everyone who was in distress . . . in debt, and . . . discontented gathered to him. So he became captain over them (1 Sam. 22:2). Talk about a ragtag, motley crew of misfits! But God used David to turn these losers into winners who later became mighty men of valor in his army. In our times of brokenness, God teams us with other broken people who are going through similar situations. It's mutually beneficial—we need them and they need us.

So, where are you running today? Are you running toward God (to Samuel, Jonathan or Ahimelech)? Or are you running away from God (to Gath)? Trouble in life is inevitable. Just remember, you have a refuge you can run to—"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Ps. 46:1).
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